

Cover
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A SHORT
INQUIRY

WHETHER THE USAGE OF
LAYING on of HANDS
UPON
BAPTIZED PERSONS as such
IS AN
ORDINANCE
OF
CHRIST.

I also will shew my opinion Job xxxii. 10.
I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of
the LORD to be faithful. 1. Cor. vii. 25.
In vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the
commandments of men Matt. xv. 9.
To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not ac-
cording to this word, it is because there is no
light in them. Isai. viii. 20.

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Gift of
Ernest L. Gay.
Boston

To the R E A D E R.

CHRISTIAN READER,

THE design of the following tract is to assist Christians in their searches after truth concerning the Imposition of hands upon the baptized, and to promote peace and harmony among those good people who may differ in their sentiments about it. With this view, I have here faithfully produc'd what is chiefly said on both sides. And I desire of thee Christian Reader! (and it is a reasonable request) to divest thyself of all prejudice for or against those good men that are not agreed in this point, and also for or against the practice itself; and give thyself free liberty to judge determine and act, according to the weight of evidence that may appear to be for or against it. Search the word of GOD thyself, and remember the best teachers know but in part. And let me also desire of thee to consider, that the practice in question whether a duty or not a duty, is far from being one of the weightier matters of the law; and therefore let thy zeal for it be moderate (if that be thy judgment) and may the LORD give me and thee understanding in all things!

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A SHORT
INQUIRY, &c.

* * * * S the validity of all religious institutions
* A * depends on their divine authority, it
* * must be the indispenfible duty of every
* * Christian ferioufly to enquire, concern-
ing every ufage that claims the honor of being
a divine appointment, is this of GOD or of MEN?

AND this enquiry I propofe to make in the
following tract, with refpect to the ufage of *Impo-
fition of hands upon the baptized as fuch.*

AND that this practice, *i. e. laying on of hands
upon the baptized as fuch*, is not of GOD but of
Men, notwithstanding fome thro' a miftaken zeal,
even make it a term of Christian communion, to
me appears undeniably plain and evident from the
following obvious confiderations.

Firft, Becaufe we have no command or direction
for it from our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great
and only lawgiver of his Church.

In the commission issued forth to his Apostles to go and teach all nations baptizing them, &c. there is not the least intimation that they should when they had taught and baptized them lay hands on them. And is it reasonable to suppose if it had been the will of CHRIST that this should have been practis'd, he would not upon this occasion have mention'd it? Would it not have been very natural to add, when he had commissioned them to go teach all nations baptizing them, &c. *and laying hands on them*? But there is not a syllable of this kind. If it should be said it is included in the things which the Apostles were to teach them, it may be answer'd, how do you know that? If this kind of reasoning be admitted, you may upon the same foundation introduce and establish any human Invention whatever.

Secondly, There is no proper or sufficient *example of hands being laid upon the baptized as such.*

WE no where read of *John* the Baptist using it on the multitudes he baptized. Our LORD himself after he was baptiz'd had no hands laid on him. And if he intended to appoint this usage as an ordinance in his Church, why should he not set an example of it as well as of baptism and the LORD's supper? He needed not the one more than the other. And as he gave the greatest sanction to both the last institutions, baptism and the LORD's supper, by his own example, one would expect he should

should to this also of laying on of hands, if it had been his will that this practice should have been attended to as a divine ordinance. But here is not the least notice taken of it. Not so as to the sabbath; for we read of his coming to his disciples and speaking peace to them repeatedly on the first day of the week; see *John* 20. 19.—21. 26. And as our LORD did not himself submit to this rite, so neither does it appear those disciples did which he made and by his Apostles baptized; see *John* 4. 1. 2. And if this practice of *laying on of hands* succeeded baptism (as is pretended) it seems strange there should be no account of any such thing in all the instances of baptism being administer'd in the four Evangelists; which yet there is not.

AND as there is an entire silence in Scripture thus far about this rite, so in *Acts* 2. 38. 39. 40. which contains the most perfect account of the order in which the Apostles proceeded in the administration of divine ordinances, we have not the most distant intimation of any such thing. We read that *Peter* preached the word to them and called upon them to repent and be baptized, that they who gladly received the word were baptiz'd, and that there were added unto them three thousand souls, and they continued in the Apostles doctrine, i. e. the doctrine they preached, and in fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers. But here's

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not a syllable of their having hands laid on them. And yet had this been done, it seems hard to say how it escap'd the notice of the historian, or how he came to be entirely silent about it. To *suppose* it was done tho' not mention'd, is to suppose without any reason or foundation, and discovers the weakness of that cause which is oblig'd to have recourse to so slight an artifice for its support.

As to its not being said *Acts* 4. 4. that those who believed *were baptiz'd*, all that was necessary to the design of the historian in that place, was only to observe that notwithstanding the persecution the Apostles met with, the word they preached was successful to the conversion of great numbers. But take this passage as you will, is this parallel to that abovemention'd, wherein notwithstanding the two ordinances of *Baptism* and the LORD's supper are expressly mentioned, there is no notice at all taken of a pretended *third* ordinance, i. e. *laying on of hands on the baptized as such*? In the one place no ordinance at all is mention'd; in the other *two ordinances* and several other things are particularly specified, and yet a pretended *third* ordinance is entirely omitted. Besides, there is no dispute but we have both precept and example for baptizing believers in many passages, but for laying on hands upon the baptiz'd as such, we are without either precept or example, not only in the passage referr'd to but in every other. Nor is there any reason

to suppose, the Apostles themselves laid hands upon the baptized as such.

THE places chiefly referr'd to in support of this practice are *Acts* viii. 17, &c. and *Acts* xix. 1, 2, 3, &c. As to the first of these, we are told verse 12, that when they who heard *Philip* preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of JESUS CHRIST, they were baptized both men and women. Amongst others *Simon*, we read v. 13, believed also. Now when the Apostles, 'tis added v. 14, which were at *Jerusalem* heard that *Samaria* had received the word of God, they sent unto them *Peter* and *John*, who when they were come down prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for as yet he was fallen on none of them, *i. e.* in his extraordinary gifts whereby they might work miracles in confirmation of the doctrine they had received, only they were baptized in the name of JESUS. Then laid they their hands upon them and they receiv'd the Holy Ghost *i. e.* in his extraordinary gifts as before noted. For they had prior to their baptism believed or professed so to do, and consequently had received the common *i. e.* the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. And indeed it seems impossible that we should in this passage understand any thing by the phrase Holy Ghost but his extraordinary gifts, as it is expressly said that as yet *i. e.* before the Apostles laid their hands upon them, he was fallen

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upon none of them. Now this was true only with respect to his extraordinary gifts. Besides, it is said that *Simon* saw that the Holy Ghost was conferr'd by the laying on of the Apostles hands. Now if by the Holy Ghost be meant sanctifying grace, how could it be *seen* immediately by *Simon*? The power of working miracles might soon be visible, but special sanctifying grace, especially to a wicked man, and such *Simon* was, could not. And then can it be tho't that *Simon* would have offered the Apostles money for the power of conferring sanctifying grace by the laying on of his hands? It is plain beyond all reasonable doubt that by the Holy Ghost which these believers in *Samaria* receiv'd by the imposition of the Apostles hands, we are to understand his miraculous gifts.

WHETHER the Apostles upon this occasion laid hands upon all who had been baptiz'd, or only upon some who were to be officers in the Church; whether upon women and men or only upon the latter, is altogether uncertain. If conjectures are to be allow'd every one may conjecture just what he please. It does not however appear probable from the history, that they laid their hands upon *all* that had been baptiz'd, as *Simon* does not seem to have had hands laid upon him. But be this as it will, it does not alter the matter at all. For it is still certain, that all who had hands laid on them, receiv'd the extraordinary or miraculous gifts

gifts of the Holy Ghost. And suppose that there were women as well as men who had hands laid on them, may it not be consider'd as an accomplishment of that prophecy in *Joel* ii. 28. 29.—and your sons and *your daughters* shall prophesy, &c? Which seems the more probable, as *Philip* had four daughters who did prophesy, and very likely receiv'd the gift of prophesy, thro' the laying on of the Apostles hands at this time. But that it was not a practice to lay hands upon all the baptized as such, seems evident from the account we have in the same chapter where we have so much about laying on of hands, of the conversion and baptism of the Eunuch. For in the history of him, there is not a word said of hands being laid on him, but from the whole of the account the greatest reason to conclude the contrary. However, if even *all* that were baptiz'd had in the Apostles days hands laid on them, they had thereby extraordinary gifts conferr'd, and when such gifts can be conferr'd now let the practice be renewed. But to say the least, 'tis mere supposition, and very improbable supposition, to imagine that hands *were* laid on *all* that were baptized. Nay, I think we may say, 'tis certain this was not the case.

As to the *Second* passage, *Acts* xxx. 1. 2. &c. the bare reading the history of what was done, is sufficient to show its design. For we are told that when *Paul* laid hands upon them, the Holy Ghost

came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied. And how any should hence infer that laying on of hands upon the baptiz'd as such, is an ordinance of CHRIST, is very surprizing. Unless the same or similar effects could be produc'd thereby, why should the practice be continued? Where and when the thing signified ceases, should not the sign cease? That we need the spirit to strengthen comfort support quicken sanctify, &c. now as well as those in the first times is very true; but to plead on this account for the use of laying on of hands, till that be prov'd a means of conveying the spirit *in these respects*, is quite beside the purpose. Upon this plan we might introduce all the fooleries of the Church of *Rome*. For 'tis pleaded they are helpful to devotion, &c. and then instead of two or according to some three divine institutions, we might have seven or perhaps seven hundred.

INDEED when we consider the reasoning of some of our brethren, it seems strange that laying on of hands *before* baptism as well as *after* has not been pleaded for, from the example of *Ananias*, who put his hands upon *Saul* and restor'd sight to him and filled him with the Holy Ghost, after which he arose and was baptiz'd. If it be said *Saul* receiv'd an extraordinary cure by this means, which is not therefore to be imitated, it may also be said that all those on whom hands were laid
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by the Apostles receiv'd extraordinary gifts, and their example is therefore no more a precedent for common practice than the example of *Ananias* with respect to *Saul*.

UPON the whole, there is no proper example any more than command, for laying on of hands upon the baptized as such. We have no account of any Ministers but the Apostles that laid hands at all. Many others preached and baptized, but we have not a single example of any of them laying on of hands, but the Apostles only. And wherever we have any account of *their* laying on of hands, it is evident miraculous gifts were thereby convey'd. And if they are to be imitated in the use of a rite whereby they convey'd extraordinary gifts, at the same time that we pretend not to convey the same or similar gifts, we may as well pretend to imitate them in healing the sick, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, or any other thing peculiar to the Apostolical office. But in order to prove from sufficient example that it is a duty to lay hands upon the baptiz'd as such, it should be made to appear that all who were baptiz'd had hands laid on them, and that imposition of hands was us'd to confer the common sanctifying grace of the spirit of God. Which however cannot be done.

As to baptism and the LORD's supper, they are plainly instituted by the LORD JESUS CHRIST.
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They were both attended to by our LORD himself, and by his Apostles and other ministers. That baptism was administer'd by ordinary ministers is granted, and it is evident the LORD's supper was likewise. For can any one imagine that ordinance was administer'd by an Apostle in the Church of *Corinth* when they fell into such irregularities in their celebrating it? Or would the Apostle *Paul* have sent them written directions with respect to that ordinance, if another Apostle had been present with them to administer it amongst them? And then the ends to be answered by these institutions are of as much concern to Christians now as to the primitive Christians. Which is true likewise as to the first day sabbath. But not so as to Imposition of hands. There is no command for this usage. It was practis'd only by the Apostles, and not by other ordinary Ministers of Christ, that we know of, however some may *suppose* it was. And the ends answer'd by it were peculiar to that age, when for the confirmation of the Gospel it was necessary *miraculous gifts* should be communicated to those that embrac'd it. If this rite of laying on of hands had not been us'd to convey miraculous gifts, as it certainly was, the example of the Apostles might be pleaded in support of the practice. But as this was undoubtedly the case, the example of the Apostles is no more to the purpose to authorize this rite, than their example in healing the

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the sick, raising the dead, &c. to authorize our imitation of them in any of these things. We proceed to observe, that as there is neither command nor example for the laying on of hands upon *the baptized as such*, so neither is there *Thirdly* any just consequence from whence this practice can be inferr'd.

IT is argued that imposition of hands being mention'd after the doctrine of baptisms in *Heb. vi. 2.* plainly supposes that it follow'd baptism and was to be us'd after it.

LAYING on of hands say the patrons of this rite, is here join'd with repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment: now if laying on of hands be not a considerable part of practical religion and one of the six principles of christianity, why should it be join'd here with five important articles of the christian faith?

IN answer to which I would observe—it is the *doctrine* and not the *rite* of laying on of hands, that is here mention'd and intended; *i. e.* the doctrine which was taught by the use of this rite under the mosaic dispensation, as we shall see hereafter. Now this is no more a part of *practical religion* than the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. The Apostle does not introduce imposition of hands in this passage as a thing practis'd or an ordinance
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now in force, but only exhorts the believing *Hebrews* not to lay again the foundation of the *doctrine* of it; which has no reference at all in my opinion to the practice of the Apostles in laying on of hands upon private members or public officers of the christian Church, for what doctrine belongs particularly to that rite? Besides, here is no command for it in this scripture, but only the *doctrine* of it mention'd. Now if the mention of the *doctrine* of imposition of hands be a proof that it is a divine institution, I have good proof that laying on of hands upon children, and stretching forth the hand, are divine institutions too, for these are mention'd in scripture. But the reference of the Apostle in this passage is most evidently to laying on of hands under the ceremonial law. If it be ask'd why then is it join'd with baptisms? We answer, because christian baptism which is but one, is not in the least meant here, but ceremonial washings. The words might as well be render'd the doctrine of *washings*, as the same word is translated chap. ix. 10. and in every other place in the New Testament. But then 'tis further urg'd, if we are to understand the Apostle as speaking of the washings and imposition of hands us'd among the Jews, why are repentance, faith, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, which are no part of the ceremonial law but articles of the christian faith, join'd with these? To which it may be answer'd, these principles

principles tho' christian principles yet are jewish principles likewise. Indeed consider'd as christian principles they are but some of the first and least distinguishing, and are therefore compar'd to milk, not as has been intimated by a certain writer on account of their nourishing nature, &c. but as being fit only for those that were babes in knowledge and could not bear strong meat. They are indeed christian principles, but they are such as are common likewise to Judaism, and which the Christian is by no means to rest in but rather to leave if he would go on to perfection. That is he is not to desert or give up these principles, but to build thereon, and not to be again laying this foundation but to go on to perfection. That these principles are however jewish as well as christian who can doubt that reads the Old Testament? They are all taught there with the greatest clearness. Indeed it has been said, how can these principles be said to be jewish since many among the Jews, the Sadducees particularly, denied the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment? Excellent reasoning! And how can the doctrines of the Trinity, the Deity of CHRIST, &c. &c. be a part then of the christian religion, since so many Arians and Socinians who profess the christian religion, deny them? But surely you can't need to be told that the jewish religion, as delivered of God, is one thing, and the errors of many of the Jews are quite

another thing. It cannot with the least appearance of truth I am sure be said, that the principles mention'd by the Apostle in this passage are not taught in the Old Testament, since it is so abundantly evident that they are. Indeed, the Apostle in this, *Heb. vi. 2.* seems to have had a particular reference to that part of the ceremonial law, which is recorded in *Lev. xvi.* You have repentance from dead works and laying on of hands in ver. 21. *And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, &c.* And you have faith towards God and baptisms in the 24 and 28 verses: *And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth and offer his burnt-offering, &c.* And ver. 28, *He that burneth them shall wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water, &c.* For tho' faith be not expressly mentioned here, yet is it implied in their offering burnt-offerings to make an atonement. And as to the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, even *Job*, early as he lived, seems to have been no stranger to these truths, for he boldly declares, *Job xix. 25. &c. I know that my redeemer liveth, &c.* And that the resurrection particularly, which includes in it an eternal judgment without doubt, is to be reckoned a jewish as well as christian principle, is evident from

from our LORD's words, *Luke xx. 37. Now that the dead are raised even Moses shewed at the bush, &c.*

UPON the whole, if imposition of hands upon the baptized be a gospel ordinance, this text in *Hebrews vi.* has no reference to it at all; but the doctrine of laying on of hands in this passage, is no other than the great doctrine of our redemption by CHRIST, which doctrine was taught by the use of this right under the Mosaic dispensation: which will further appear from the following remarks.

First, The epistle in which this text is found was written to the *Hebrews* who were jewish and not gentile believers.

Secondly, The Apostle exhorts these believing *Hebrews* to leave these principles as but the *beginning* (as the word might be render'd) of the doctrine of CHRIST, and to go on unto perfection. Which implies these two things. *First*, That these things are not fix chief principles of the christian religion as such, for if they were why should the Apostle exhort these *Hebrews* to leave them? *Secondly*, That the Apostle considers these things as believed by the Jews, and which *begin* those that are in CHRIST (see the *Welch* version), *i. e.* were the first things believed by them, and by which they were first led unto CHRIST; which in this view he might with propriety exhort them to leave or not to rest

in, but go on towards a higher degree of perfection.

Thirdly, From the manifest design of the Apostle's words, which was to bring off these *Hebrew* believers from the ceremonial law further into the gospel: and from the form of the words which is Jewish, as repentance *from dead works*, faith *towards God*, the doctrine not the rite of baptisms in the plural number, and laying on of hands:—it is evident that by baptisms is not meant the gospel ordinance of baptism which is but one, and by laying on of hands, is not intended laying hands upon the baptized; but the washings and laying on of hands made use of on various occasions under the ceremonial law. And indeed it is strange that so much stress should be laid upon this passage which upon the most cool and impartial examination of it, plainly appears to have nothing to do with the matter.

And it is worthy observation what a stir is made by many about the six principles or doctrines mentioned in this passage; as if they contained the whole gospel, and our salvation depended entirely upon them. And yet here is not a word said of the ever glorious trinity, the proper deity of the son of God, original sin, efficacious grace, the perseverance of the saints to glory, nor yet, if by laying on of hands be meant laying hands
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upon the baptized, is there a word of the atonement that first and leading article in the christian scheme. But it should seem by the temper and conduct of some, that a man may deny any thing so he does but hold these six principles, especially that of laying on hands upon the baptized as such. I bear them record they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Hitherto then no warrant at all appears to justify the practice in question. Imposition of hands upon the baptized does not appear to have been practis'd by any but the Apostles, and by them only to confer some miraculous and extraordinary gifts, which cannot possibly be an example for us, who pretend not to confer any such gifts.

But it is said, tho' by the Holy Ghost be meant chiefly extraordinary gifts, yet the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in them on whom he fell, to confirm them in the truth, which sprang forth in their words, in boldly confessing JESUS CHRIST, seems to be included. Thus *Peter*, *Stephen* and *Paul*, were Men full of the Holy Ghost, that is of the Spirit that powerfully wro't in them, whose effects were various. To which 'tis sufficient to answer, that whatever be meant by the Holy Ghost, tis evidently something that was peculiar and extraordinary; and there is not one single instance of imposition of hands upon the baptized,

baptized; but miraculous gifts were thereby communicated. That the same persons had also and perhaps in a large measure the common sanctifying grace of the Spirit is not denied, all we say is, that imposition of hands upon the baptized was a rite us'd to convey extraordinary and not ordinary gifts. The Holy Ghost in his common sanctifying influences we are suppos'd to have before we are baptiz'd, and are encourag'd to hope for larger and larger measures thereof as our circumstances may require, in the future part of our pilgrimage; but have no authority to expect any particular effusions thereof at the period on which hands may be laid on us.

BUT to prove that special grace was giv'n by the imposition of hands; that passage is urg'd 2 *Tim.* i. 6. *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of GOD which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.* But in order to make any thing of this passage in favour of laying on of hands upon the baptiz'd as such, it is necessary to prove *first*, That by *gift* here is meant special grace, and *secondly*, That by laying on of *Paul's* hands must be meant his laying his hands on *Timothy* as a baptiz'd person and not as a minister. But neither of these things can be prov'd. It has indeed been taken for granted that by the *gift* spoken of v. 6. is intended the spirit of power and love and a sound mind mention'd v. 7. But this does

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not seem to have been the case. By the *gift* is evidently meant a ministerial gift, which *Paul* here as well as elsewhere exhorts him to stir up, that is to be diligent in preaching the word in season and out of season, &c. which exhortation he here enforces by adding—for God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power and love, &c. As if he had said, be not therefore discourag'd in thy work. That this is the Apostle's meaning, we may be I think certain, if we consider that he is writing to *Timothy*, not as a private christian but as a minister of the gospel as you may see v. 13. and 14. And *Acts* xx. 24. the Apostle expressly speaks of the ministry as a thing *received*. But then to prove that this gift does not refer to a *ministerial* gift, but to a gift confer'd by the laying on of *Paul's* hands after baptism, and not with others at his ordination; is argued from *Timothy's* being a disciple of *Paul* (*Paul* calls him his natural son in the faith) and from *Paul's* saying particularly—by the laying on of *my* hands, which it is suppos'd can't refer to the laying on of his hands with the rest of the presbytery at his ordination, which is mention'd 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. To which we answer that *Timothy* was *Paul's* disciple we allow, but that *Paul* did not baptize him seems evident from 1 *Cor.* i. 16. Whether he laid hands on him as a baptized person is altogether uncertain. But that the laying on of his hands

hands spoken of here refers to his ordination to me is most evident, because the gift given him thereby which he is exhorted to stir up, plainly refers to the ministry. And as to *Paul's* mentioning *his* hands particularly, tho' others join'd with him upon that occasion, 'tis natural to suppose it might be to give the greater weight to what he was saying to his son *Timothy*, who no doubt had a peculiar affection for his father *Paul*. But after all whether the sense that has now been given of this passage be the true one, which to me it undoubtedly is, or whether the gloss put upon it by those of a different way of thinking be the true one, it is at best but a conjecture that can be form'd from this passage in favour of laying on of hands upon the baptized as such: and whether it is right to plead for any usage as a divine ordinance from a meer conjecture, judge ye.

Thus have we seen that there is neither command nor example nor certain consequence, to justify the practice of laying hands on the baptized as such.

As to many of the arguments brought in favour of this practice by a late writer, they are such meer suppositions without the least colour of probability to support them, that I should reckon it low unmanly trifling to pretend to enter into a particular consideration of them. Every thing that is in the least to the purpose I have fully handled.

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As to imposition of hands in ordination, 'tis a distinct thing from the practice we have been considering. But *this* is practis'd by many *only* as a sign of their approbation, &c. of the person ordained, and not as a *divine institution*: and by many others it is *not practis'd* at all. And yet those *who do*, and those who *do not* practise it, join in the same ordinations, so far are they from making it a term of christian communion and association with each other. And was imposition of hands upon the baptized, practis'd not as a *divine ordinance* and made a *term of communion*, &c. but *only* as an expressive method of praying in a particular manner for such persons at their admission into the church, it might perhaps be innocently done. But to use it as a *divine ordinance*, when it is *not* so, has a very pernicious tendency. For *first*, it tends to feed the pride of ministers, and make them think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; as if they had a power which in fact they have not. And indeed this seems to account for the intemperate warmth discovered by some of that character in support of this practice. And then *secondly*, it is likely to deceive those who submit to it, by raising their expectations of something which they fall short of; and causing them to esteem themselves better than others.

That prayer, solemn fervent prayer, should be put up for all that are admitted to Church mem-

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bership, and particularly at their first commencing members no one disputes. That we need a larger and larger measure of light and love, &c. is most certain; and we are encouraged to ask that we may receive. But to plead for the use of a particular right as a *divine ordinance* which *is not so*, is a sinful teaching for doctrines the fancies of fallible men.

I might have adduced many great authorities from writers of the first rank and eminence in favour of that sense I have given of the passages where this rite is supposed to be referr'd to; I might also have taken notice of the general disuse of this practice among the dissenters of every denomination in *England*, a very few only excepted; but I disclaim implicit faith, as much as those on the other side of the question, and am tenacious of the sacred word as the only test of truth. Those that are for imposition of hands upon the baptized, may plead if they will the custom of the establish'd Church to confirm persons when they can say the Lord's prayer the creed and the ten commandments (which does not succeed baptism as administer'd by them now, but is done when they come to years of maturity) and they may plead its being one of the ordinances adopted by the Church of *Rome* also: we will not dispute with them about the sanction arising from such authorities.

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I would further observe that it would be well for a late writer in favour of this usage, if he was to consider the consequence of his own reasonings. Had he done this, surely he would not have laid himself so open as he has. For if supposition is to pass for argument, why may we not suppose as many do that the infant seed of believers are to be baptiz'd, and that washing of feet, anointing with oyl, the holy kifs, &c. are divine ordinances? There is as much if not more, said for these things as for laying hands on the baptized as such.

INDEED some of the advocates for this rite have practis'd, *anointing with oil* those that were sick, but with what success and reputation is left for them to say.

THERE have been also, and doubtless are some still, who would much approve of the primitive custom of having all things in common; but here others choose to depart from the primitive apostolic custom. And yet is there not much more said for that, than for imposition of hands upon the baptized *as such*? There is no doubt but this having all things common was practis'd, see *Acts* ii. 44. nor is there any mention of its being abrogated, or confin'd to the Apostle's days. And yet this custom is allow'd to be but temporary, but not so as to imposition of hands, tho' by no means so well supported.

THERE

THERE have been also some of late, who have practis'd leaping and jumping in the service of God, and have pleaded *David's* example in support of it. And indeed when men give way to their own fanciful interpretations of scripture, what absurdities may they not run into?

HAD the champion for this rite of laying hands upon the baptized, employed his time and zeal in recommending and inculcating brotherly love and harmony, one would naturally suppose he must have done a more acceptable service to God and good men, and much better have answered the ends of the christian ministry; than in kindling a fire in the Churches and among brethren who were at peace, and would perhaps have continued so, had not this flame been kindled by his instrumentality. A flame, which it is to be fear'd (and to me, whatever it may be to him, tis a painful thought) will scarcely be extinguished in his days if at all.—But oh thou God of love and peace, prevent so great a calamity, and let not contention and strife proceed any further, but grant that harmony and friendship may be again restor'd and establish'd!

I have only to add, that I heartily wish we may be all inspir'd with the pacific spirit of *Abraham* when he said to *Lot*, *Gen. xiii. 8.* *Let there be no strife I pray thee betwixt me and thee—for we be*
BRETHREN.

THEEND.